

THE PRECEPTORIAL METHOD
OF INSTRUCTION

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THE PRECEPTORIAL METHOD
OF INSTRUCTION

REPORT OF THE
COMMITTEE OF EIGHT


PRESENTED TO
THE PRESIDENT AND FACULTY
OF
PRINCETON UNIVERSITY
FEBRUARY 17, 1913

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To the President and Faculty of Princeton University.
Gentlemen:

By resolution of the Faculty, passed on February 5, 1912, the undersigned Committee was appointed "to consider the Preceptorial System and the means of promoting the general efficiency of the preceptorial method of instruction."

After several preliminary discussions on the general situation of preceptorial teaching at Princeton, a series of questions was framed, and was issued in March to every member of the Faculty. (See Appendix "A".) Its purpose was to secure as definite information as possible concerning the practices of the various Departments of the University in regard to the general application of the Preceptorial Method of instruction, its relation to classroom work, its relation to the debarring rule, its relation to examinations and grades, its use of written work, its general supervision, and the appointment of assistant professors for preceptorial work. The replies to this questionnaire were carefully considered, and their contents tabulated.

Certain topics clearly emerging from the general discussions that ensued were then made the subject of a second questionnaire issued in May to each member of the humanistic Departments of the University. (See Appendix "B".) The Committee's reasons for not sending this questionnaire to the scientific Departments may be inferred from the definition of the Preceptorial Method given in the opening pages of the subjoined report.

The criticisms made, the suggestions offered, and the opinions on the special topics called for by this questionnaire were likewise carefully considered.

To all this material, and to all views expressed orally to members of the Committee, we have, in our conferences of the past year, given our most earnest attention; and we offer herewith our unanimous report.

Respectfully submitted,

THE COMMITTEE OF EIGHT.

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R. B. C. JOHNSON,
C. H. JONES,
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C. G. OSGOOD,
G. M. PRIEST,
V. L. COLLINS, *Chairman.*

February 17, 1913.

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CHAPTER I

THE PRECEPTORIAL METHOD

I. *History.* The Preceptorial Method¹ arose in response to a demand. American colleges, particularly the large ones, were becoming much overcrowded, and for the most part with students indifferent to things intellectual. Teachers were baffled with the crowds that confronted them; lecturing to hundreds of immature men, however entertaining, is not teaching, and recitations in a crowded classroom are little better. Under such conditions, which are still too prevalent at all the larger institutions and many of the smaller, it was impossible, on the one hand, for even good teachers to know their men, to exercise except in the rarest cases any genuine personal influence over them, or to secure even a small part of their real energies, while on the other hand, students attending lectures and recitations seldom, if ever, extended their study of the subject of a course beyond the textbook on which they recited, or the imperfect lecture notes which they took, or the predigested syllabus which they absorbed trustfully the night before an examination. Relatively little was being done, or indeed could be done, under such conditions for the intellectual development of the individual.

Borrowing certain features from the Oxford tutorial system, it was Princeton's peculiar service to offer the most signal contribution that has been made to the solu-

¹The Committee early reached the conclusion that the word "System" as applied to the preceptorial method of instruction is a misnomer, and in this report has adopted the phrase "Preceptorial Method" as being more closely descriptive of what has hitherto been called the "Preceptorial System."

tion of this vital problem of American liberal education by installing, in the autumn of 1905, what was called the "Preceptorial System," which was nothing less than an attempt "to give undergraduates their proper release from being schoolboys, to introduce them to the privilege of maturity and independence, by putting them in the way of doing their own reading instead of getting up lectures or lessons." (*Independent*, August 3, 1905.) The underlying principle of this method of instruction was, of course, not new, but its introduction on so large a scale was unparalleled in this country, and the experiment was watched with deep interest by the American educational world.²

It was entered upon heartily by the members of the Faculty who engaged in conducting it, particularly by those who had suffered most from inaccessibility and from the overwhelming size of their classes. It was readily seen that not only does the Preceptorial Method set the student free to gain the broader conception of his work, but it also gives the lecturer and the class-room instructor the liberty as well as the opportunity to exercise a wider personal influence upon his men. The change to better teaching conditions was such that it was remarked by some that they had never before known what it really was to teach; while, as for the students, one has but to talk with various alumni from 1907 on,—the class of 1909 was the first that came under the Method for four years,—to learn the very definite advantages which they consider they enjoyed under preceptorial teaching. It was noticed that undergraduate conversation reflected the change from the old régime to the new; even outsiders asserted that athletics and college politics were giving way to more significant topics. To those whose knowledge of Princeton dates back several years it is very certain that a different attitude towards his

² A selected bibliography of the Preceptorial Method will be found in Appendix "C."

work distinguishes the undergraduate of the present college generation from his older brother of a decade ago.

For one thing, he is doing more general reading. With the establishment of the Preceptorial Method the use of the Library at once increased and has in fact doubled since the first year of the Method, the size of the student body having meanwhile increased only one-sixth. The following table of statistics for the last ten years has been supplied by the Reference Librarian from the records of the Circulation Department. That the increased use of the Library for general reading—and it must be remembered that this is not required reading—is due altogether to the influence of the Preceptorial Method is, perhaps, not an entirely justifiable inference; but the fact that the figures were stationary for some years before the introduction of the Method and that there has been a steady growth since that time may fairly suggest the working of cause and effect.

The striking contrast between the figures for the "one day" books, which were the reserved books on courses, and the figures for the "preceptorial" books, the present reservations for courses, is a direct result of the Method. If increase in general and required reading by undergraduates be a criterion of success, it may well be claimed that the Preceptorial Method has been successful in its intellectual influence on the undergraduate body.

| <i>Year</i> | <i>Enrollment</i> | <i>Two weeks books</i> | <i>One day books</i> | <i>Total</i> |
|-------------|-------------------|----------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------|
| 1902-3 | 1383 | 22,205 | 3,735 | 25,940 |
| 1903-4 | 1431 | 21,044 | 3,845 | 24,899 |
| 1904-5 | 1374 | 21,098 | 3,378 | 24,476 |
| 1905-6 | 1384 | 21,387 | 4,894 | 26,281 |
| <i>Year</i> | <i>Enrollment</i> | <i>General reading (Two weeks books)</i> | <i>Preceptorial reading</i> | <i>Total</i> |
| 1906-7 | 1347 | 17,910 | 23,508 | 41,418 |
| 1907-8 | 1301 | 18,688 | 26,590 | 45,278 |
| 1908-9 | 1314 | 19,581 | 25,104 | 44,685 |
| 1909-10 | 1400 | 23,275 | 28,895 | 52,170 |
| 1910-11 | 1442 | 24,504 | 23,912 | 48,416 |
| 1911-12 | 1543 | 26,772 | 25,938 | 52,710 |

2. *Definition.* The Preceptorial Method of instruction is one whereby instruction is given mainly through conference with individuals or with small groups in which men of like aptitudes and needs are brought together. These conferences are devoted to a discussion of reading which the student is doing on a given subject, or of papers or reports which he has written in connection with that reading under the direction of his preceptor.

At Princeton this method of instruction is carried on principally by a body of assistant professors whose special function is this work. They, however, are not the only "preceptors;" any member of the Faculty exercising the preceptorial function is in that sense a "preceptor."³

The nature of a preceptorial conference is considered at length in a subsequent section of this report (p. 46 *et seq.*).

Such a method, we think, can be applied in its entirety only in the six "reading" Departments of Philosophy, History, Politics, and Economics, Art and Archaeology, Classics, English, Modern Languages. We think that it cannot be generally applied in the Departments comprising the Division of Mathematics and Science, because these are not "reading" Departments, but primarily experimental or laboratory Departments. It is true that in a few courses of this Division the Preceptorial Method as above defined can be applied because of the body of reading that must be done; but ordinarily this is not the case. As one of these Departments puts it, replying to our first questionnaire: "We have read the questions submitted and considered each one carefully, but the work in Physical Science is so different from that of a purely academic nature, that we find it

³ The function name "preceptor" wherever used in this report is to be taken in its strict meaning as designating any member of the Faculty, whether professor, assistant professor, or instructor, who does preceptorial work. Conversely, when assistant professors alone are referred to, they are called assistant professors, although their function may be chiefly preceptorial.

impossible to answer any of the questions directly." In such Departments the laboratory offers conditions altogether favorable to the preceptorial relation and has been regarded as equivalent to it. The Mathematical Department has provided for the lower classes a substitute in the mathematical "evening hour." The Committee is not at all certain, however, that a closer application of the Method could not be made in this Department.

In the following discussion consideration is limited to the above named "reading" Departments.

A "course" under the Preceptorial Method consists not mainly of lectures, or of recitations on textbooks, but of reading to which the lectures or textbooks are complementary. The major emphasis in such a course is laid on the reading, and the final rank of the student accordingly depends more on the quality of his conference work during the term than on the result of the examination at the end of the term.

The evident purpose of this plan is that the student, and not the lecturer, shall do the work; that the student shall "read up" on the subject of the course and shall not confine his attention merely to what the lecturer or the textbook says, as is the procedure under the customary lecture or recitation system. In fact the Method is less a form of instruction than a form of study. The subject-matter of the undergraduates' studies, says the article already quoted from, "is not to be the lectures of their professors or the handful of textbooks, the narrow round of technical exercises set for them under the ordinary methods, but the reading which they should do for themselves in order to get a real first-hand command of the leading ideas, principles, and processes of the subjects which they are studying."

Obviously then, the lectures in such a course must be complementary to the reading; *i.e.*, they co-ordinate the reading, give it direction and cohesion, outline the fields of

knowledge in which the reading lies, and show its relation to other fields; they present the broad aspects of movements or periods or problems in human thought and progress, whether historical, political, social, philosophical, artistic, or literary; and finally they elucidate particular or intricate matters of detail which may be brought into relief during the reading. The reading, on the other hand, is concerned with the contemporary expression of those movements, periods, and problems; or with the causes which produced them; or with their result. It is quite conceivable, therefore, that under the Preceptorial Method the entire series of lectures delivered in a course would not cover the whole subject of the course, but consider only certain features of it.

In courses where the number of students is small enough for the lecturer to give all the preceptorial instruction in his course without enlisting other aid, the relation of lectures to reading may be somewhat different and is a matter for the lecturer's own arrangement; the smallness of the class may enable him to make every lecture or class-room exercise take on the intimate nature of a conference; but even so, the essential preponderance of "reading" by the members of the class, and the emphasis on the *subject* as against the *course*, must not be overlooked.

The success of preceptorial teaching as above defined naturally depends for efficiency upon certain personal qualities in the preceptor, which are brought into instant demand, once the contact between student and teacher becomes close. A preceptor must know his subject, must keep up with the progress of discovery in his particular field, should be himself a discoverer. But that is not enough. He should be free from departmental or institutional prejudice. He should be a stimulus to the mental health of the men who rub against him, a man with the teaching instinct, not only one who can and will teach, but one who would rather

teach than not. He should have tact, tolerance, sympathy, imagination. He should be a man of spiritual capacity. Finally he should be a man who will appreciate the power and influence which preceptorial teaching places within his grasp, and one who will not shirk the personal responsibility that such an opportunity brings.

Men of such qualities are not to be found without seeking. But it is necessary that they should be sought, and when found, kept. One of our colleagues writes: "The efficiency of the system depends first and last upon the personnel of the preceptorial body, or in each case, upon the personality of the preceptor; and unless this is recognized and acted upon, no amount of legislation, co-ordination, or apparatus will save the system." Another says: "It is much more necessary to success . . . that we should be able to trust the preceptor than that we should trust the system." In short, the measure of the personnel of the preceptorial staff will be, to a pre-eminent degree, the measure of the efficiency of the Method.

Nevertheless, it should not be forgotten that, given the personnel, something more is required in order to make the Method permanently efficient; and what that is has never been very clearly or completely defined.

Committed as Princeton is to the Preceptorial Method, now no longer an experiment but the most vital and successful feature of her undergraduate teaching, and an instrument of whose unique value there can be no question whatsoever, it is an obvious duty to seek the road to that permanent efficiency.

This task was perhaps not so easy at the installation of the Method, when the enthusiasm of novelty ran high and the quick response of success blinded most men's eyes to certain weaknesses in Princeton's application of the Method. To analyze these weaknesses, to suggest remedies, and to discover a way to greater efficiency, the present Committee was appointed.

CHAPTER II

IMPAIRMENT OF EFFICIENCY

After seven years' trial the Preceptorial Method is found to be in a peculiar situation. We have discovered in it an even greater potentiality than was at first suspected; yet at the same time we have allowed the enthusiasm of our first ideals to cool. Indeed, those first tentative ideals have not only not been realized, but the application of them has suffered actual impairment.

This impairment seems to be due to three main causes: (1) inadequate preliminary consideration of vital details: financing the Method; age, status, and future of the assistant professor engaged for preceptorial work; administration of the Method; (2) weakening of the staff of assistant professors; and (3) decline in the quality of conference work.

1. *Inadequate preliminary consideration of vital details.* Most of the ills from which the efficiency of the Method at present suffers are traceable to the lack of adequate financing. Though seven years have elapsed since its inauguration, it is not yet funded.

In the next place, we believe that, at the inauguration of the Preceptorial Method, a grave mistake was made in emphasizing, in the appointment of assistant professors chiefly for preceptorial work, the preference that they should be, in the main, young, unmarried men. It was thought that such men could more easily become the companions of their students and hence exert a deeper influence upon their lives. At first glance, perhaps, it would seem plausible that closer personal relations should exist between a student and a young teacher than between a student and an older

teacher. But the facts of experience have not justified this early belief. It can, in fact, be seriously questioned whether the contact between student and teacher does not become richer and more fruitful in proportion as the teacher advances in age and in deeper experience of life; indeed, whether there is not an inner barrier in the nature of the average student which is more easily thrown down for age than for youth. In many cases the average and normal student will more quickly extend his confidence to teachers much older than himself than to those nearer his own age. The truth of the whole matter, of course, regardless of any average tendency, is that any vital relations between student and teacher depend far more on purely individual factors and elements of personality than upon age; some men by nature and temperament are fitted to carry on preceptorial teaching, and others by nature and temperament are unfitted to carry it on. But, in the case of those fitted for the task, increasing age can only increase their fitness. For the preceptorial function at its highest involves more than a mere technical teaching of books—it involves a co-ordination of knowledge and an application of teaching to life, a vitalizing and humanizing influence upon the undergraduate which can spring in its richest form only from a knowledge and true estimate of life itself. This is the product of increasing age.

The question of the age of the assistant professor can easily be shown to be vital to the interests of the Preceptorial Method, since it has an important corollary. If the original idea that preceptors should be young unmarried men be accepted, it will be seen that even when the Method itself is permanently established, the individual units of the Method, the assistant professors, will not be permanent, and it will be logical to appoint such men for comparatively short terms at moderate salaries. But if the other idea is held, as we believe it should be, that a preceptor's success

(his technical qualifications taken for granted) depends not upon an arbitrary question of age, but upon personality, and that age will ripen and develop rather than decrease his power, then it becomes necessary at once so to establish the Preceptorial Method that assistant professors who have won success may be retained on a basis of permanent appointment, at adequate salaries, preferably with a system of graded and automatic promotion within proper limits.

The experience of other universities, notably Oxford, where the tutorial method has been successfully employed, would, we believe, support strongly the view that the Preceptorial Method, to achieve permanent and continuing success, must itself be permanent in its essential units. That is, making due allowance in this, as in any institution, for ordinary mutation, its successful units should, by virtue of their success, establish themselves as permanent units. It is not apparent in what respect preceptorial teaching and influence so differ from all other teaching as to justify a system demanding a constant flux of young teachers, who in Princeton acquire experience and prove a skill which in the end will serve only to enrich other educational institutions for whose faculties we provide a convenient training school. And yet, if we mistake not, the plan upon which the Preceptorial Method was inaugurated lacked just this idea of permanence in personnel. And, lacking this feature, it necessarily failed to provide adequately for those who by virtue of success won that inevitable permanence which the original plan failed to contemplate.

In fact, it may fairly be questioned whether the operation of the Preceptorial Method has not, in its history at Princeton, been entirely pragmatic. It was necessary at its inauguration to refrain from confining the principle of the Method by too definite regulation, and to avoid establishing it at the beginning upon too definite a foundation, lest some of the vital elements in its structure should later

prove to need radical change. It was necessary to feel the way of progress step by step, to adapt an idea that had been highly successful under English conditions to the peculiar requirements of American education. In this process the fact has emerged clearly that, instead of the preceptorial appointee's completing his period of best influence and becoming ready to be cast into the outward flux, his influence and power have steadily grown. Clearly then, the time has come to acknowledge that the best preceptorial teaching is not necessarily done by young men, in fact, that, judged by the experience of Oxford as well as by our own, the reverse is true.

As regards the vital matter of the status and future of assistant professors under preceptorial appointment, it may be said that in the case of such men as much as in the case of other teachers, or possibly more, efficiency is in a measure a product of the general personal conditions under which they work. Doubtful tenure and uncertain dignity of position, insufficient salary, lack of a system of graded and automatic promotion, not to speak of the fact that some at least have had a feeling that there has been an unjust variation of salary throughout their number—these have been factors that have operated, as year has followed year, to arouse disappointment, dissatisfaction, unrest. This fact is an unpleasant one, but it is nevertheless a fact. And the reason is apparent. The main body of the assistant professors are receiving much the same pay as seven years ago, are no more certain of their future than seven years ago, and in many cases have lost hope of seeing such a system of graded and automatic promotion established at Princeton as obtains at Yale, Harvard, and other leading American colleges.

When the Preceptorial Method was inaugurated, these questions had not yet become troublesome. The assistant professors appointed to that work were for the most part

young men; the term of appointment was in the main a term of five years; the Method was somewhat in the nature of an experiment. But it can no longer be regarded in that light. As a body, these men have been successful in the work they then began; the influence of the Method has quickened the intellectual life of the undergraduates; its effect has been widely noted and commented upon.⁴ By all of this Princeton has richly profited. While these satisfactory objective results have been accomplished, the passing of time has only emphasized the fundamental importance of the subjective problems, above cited, of the assistant professor's present and future. They have become pressing questions, and continued delay in reaching a solution must have increasing effect in impairing the efficiency of the Preceptorial Method.

In regard to the administration of the Method, much of the impairment of efficiency is due to the fact that certain administrative problems inherent in the application of the Oxford tutorial system to the American lecture method, and difficult of solution at the inauguration of the Method, have unfortunately not hitherto been formally considered. The Minutes of the Faculty for the winter of 1905-06, when the Method was being installed, contain only one administrative reference to the far-reaching innovation that was being introduced. The public press exploited the Method, but no official statement or description of it is found in the University Catalogue until 1909-10, or four years after its inauguration. Most regrettable of all, after the first year the formal and informal gatherings of preceptors for the discussion of difficulties were by degrees given up as the novelty wore off, or as individuals began to work out their own problems in their own way.

Later in this report these difficulties are taken up in detail; but for the present it will be sufficient, as an example,

⁴ See Bibliography in Appendix "C."

to call attention to one most important administrative feature of the Method which, in the opinion of the Committee, has never received adequate consideration, *viz.*, the general character of examination papers. It is true that a fairly broad and definite ideal of what an examination should be was formulated and presented as a feature to be incorporated in Princeton's advanced educational program. All study was henceforth to be a study of *subjects*, not a pursuing of *courses*. The student who had hitherto been accustomed to play too passive and receptive a rôle under the lecture system, was to be made to feel a new sense of responsibility; he was to be encouraged to a more active participation in the processes of his own education; he was to become a reader of books; he was to be tempted to acquire the ability to attack and master a subject through the use of his own intellectual powers and through the exertion of his own will; and he was to experience in a degree the joy which comes from the active exercise of the powers of the mind. The preceptor and the lecturer were to co-operate in helping him to achieve these desirable ends.

The attaining of such an ideal called for capacities of an unusual sort on the part of the preceptor; it involved in some cases a modification in the character of the lectures; and it of necessity implied examinations framed in such a way as to encourage active and independent thinking on the part of the student, and thus to give a distinct stimulus toward the achievement of the new ideals of scholarship.

Examinations of this character might well be resorted to under any system of teaching. But as an integral part of the Preceptorial Method of education they are, in the opinion of many, a *sine qua non* of its highest efficiency. They offer to the preceptor the maximum of freedom in giving his individuality to his work; they reward the student who has profited by the opportunity which the preceptorial conference offers him; and they correspondingly magnify in

the mind of the student the importance of independent scholarly work.

Now, it may be impossible by any sort of machinery to insure for all time the perpetuation of such ideals in framing examination papers. Certainly no attempt to provide such machinery was made when Princeton's new method was being established. Later in this report certain suggestions are made, designed to accomplish the end as far as may be possible by any formal legislation. (See p. 53 *et seq.*) But at this point we wish to express our conviction that this matter of the character of examinations has never received the consideration it demands; that its bearing on the success of the Preceptorial Method has not been generally apprehended; and that, in the opinion of many who have answered our questionnaires, no one thing has so greatly discouraged some of our best preceptors as the general failure to appreciate the intimate connection between the character of examination questions and the highest achievement in preceptorial work.

2. *Weakening of staff of assistant professors.* The impairment of the original efficiency of the Method in certain Departments through a weakening of the staff of assistant professors seems to your Committee to be undeniable.

In the six "reading" Departments of the University there were in 1906-07 27 professors, 50 assistant professors on preceptorial appointment, 5 assistant professors not on preceptorial appointment, and 17 instructors.

In the same Departments in 1911-12 there were 34 professors, 37 assistant professors on preceptorial appointments, 3 not on preceptorial appointment, and 27 instructors.

The following table shows the fluctuation in each of these Departments.⁵

⁵ Assistant professors not on preceptorial appointment are bracketed. It seemed to the majority of the Committee that to

| | 1906-07 | 1907-08 | 1908-09 | 1909-10 | 1910-11 | 1911-12 |
|-------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| <i>Philosophy</i> | | | | | | |
| Prof. | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 7 | 7 |
| Asst. Prof. | 5 | 5 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 3 |
| Instr. | 3 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 2 | 2 |
| | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| | 14 | 14 | 14 | 14 | 12 | 12 |
| Students | 360 | 321 | 330 | 446 | 466 | 454 |
| <i>H. P. E.</i> | | | | | | |
| Prof. | 5 | 5 | 5 | 6 | 6 | 7 |
| Asst. Prof. | 12 (2) | 10 (2) | 10 (2) | 8 (2) | 7 (1) | 6 (1) |
| Instr. | 2 | 4 | 4 | 5 | 7 | 8 (1) |
| | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| | 21 | 21 | 21 | 21 | 21 | 23 |
| Students | 1136 | 1166 | 1097 | 1145 | 1442 | 1508 |
| <i>Art</i> | | | | | | |
| Prof. | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 3 |
| Asst. Prof. | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Instr. | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | (1) | (2) |
| | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 6 | 7 |
| Students | 79 | 65 | 79 | 80 | 71 | 72 |

differentiate, for the purpose of this table only, the assistant professors on preceptorial appointment from those who were not, would show more clearly the point at issue. Temporary lecturers and assistants are similarly bracketed with instructors. Members of the Faculty serving in two Departments are counted only in the Department where the bulk of their work seems to lie. For instance, the Musgrave Professor of Latin in the Department of Classics is also Tutor in Roman Law in the Department of History, Politics, and Economics; in the table he is counted only as a professor in the Department of Classics. In 1909-10 and 1910-11 an instructor in the Department of Philosophy also had work in the Department of History, Politics, and Economics. In the table he is counted in both these years as a member of the Department of Philosophy. In 1911-12 an assistant professor in the Department of Classics was also a member of the Department of Art and Archaeology, but is listed in the table only in the Department of Classics.

| | 1906-07 | 1907-08 | 1908-09 | 1909-10 | 1910-11 | 1911-12 |
|-------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| <i>Classics</i> | | | | | | |
| Prof. | 7 | 7 | 8 | 8 | 7 | 8 |
| Asst. Prof. | 11 | 11 | 12 | 9 | 7 | 6 |
| Instr. | 2 | 4 | 2 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| | 20 | 22 | 22 | 23 | 21 | 22 |
| Students | 665 | 600 | 647 | 656 | 809 | 808 |
| <i>English</i> | | | | | | |
| Prof. | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 7 |
| Asst. Prof. | 10 (1) | 10 (1) | 10 (1) | 10 (1) | 10 (1) | 9 |
| Instr. | 5 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 3 |
| | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| | 21 | 20 | 20 | 20 | 19 | 19 |
| Students | 1007 | 942 | 958 | 973 | 918 | 1100 |
| <i>Mod. Lang.</i> | | | | | | |
| Prof. | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Asst. Prof. | 10 (2) | 10 (2) | 10 (2) | 9 (2) | 10 (2) | 11 (2) |
| Instr. | 5 | 5 | 5 | 6 | 4 | 3 |
| | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| | 19 | 19 | 19 | 19 | 18 | 18 |
| Students | 771 | 759 | 715 | 810 | 744 | 871 |

Your Committee is aware of the danger of laying too much stress on statistics; and it might seem that, in a matter so intangible as the relation of size of staff to efficiency of teaching, the use of statistics is peculiarly open to attack. But we believe that facts which will be brought out in our later discussion of these figures, will support the deduction here drawn. It may also be argued that professors are doing more preceptorial work now than when the Method was newly inaugurated; but the number of students on the rolls has likewise increased; so that there has been proportionately no actual gain on the side of staff.

The facts are that in 1906-07 there were in the "reading" Departments 50 assistant professors appointed to do preceptorial work who had been picked from several times as

many applicants. In 1911-12, including all intervening preceptorial appointments, there were only 37. Of the original 50, seven up to 1911-12 had been promoted to professorships in Princeton, 18 had left Princeton for other faculties, 24 were still on the preceptorial staff, and one had been transferred to an assistant professorship not in the preceptorial class.

The most striking changes have occurred in the Departments of History, Politics, and Economics and Classics.

In 1906-07 History, Politics, and Economics had 12 assistant professors with mainly preceptorial function; in 1911-12 only 6. The number of professors remained the same; while the number of instructors rose from 2 to 8 and the number of students on the rolls increased from 1136 to 1508. Plainly then, in this Department, which is the largest "reading" Department in the University, and the one most generally elected by upper-classmen, the preceptorial conference work is being done very largely, if not mainly, by instructors.

In 1906-07 Classics had 11 assistant professors on preceptorial appointment; in 1911-12 only 6. During this period the number of professors was increased by one, the number of instructors rose from 2 to 8, and the number of students on the rolls advanced from 665 to 808. Here, however, any analogy to History, Politics, and Economics, ceases.

For while History, Politics, and Economics draws its clientèle chiefly from the upper classes, Classics receives over 90% of its numbers from the lower classes through required courses. For instance, of the 807 men on the Classics rolls in First Term, 1911-12, 754 were Freshmen and Sophomores following chiefly the required courses of the Department, while only 29 were Juniors and 24 were Seniors, taking the Department's electives. Similarly in Second Term, 1911-12, of the 804 men on the rolls, 751 were

Freshmen and Sophomores taking chiefly required courses, while only 36 were Juniors and 17 were Seniors, electing courses.

As a matter of fact, with the exception of a one-term course in Sophomore year, the Preceptorial Method is at present followed by the Department of Classics only in the upper-class years. In one course to be sure, which runs through the first term of Freshman year, students are met in small groups, but merely for instruction in Composition, and in textbook outlines of Greek and Roman history. In the other lower-class courses instruction in small class-room divisions is the system followed. This state of affairs seems to us the more unfortunate in that the upper-class courses, which in most cases are conducted on preceptorial lines, are taken by so few men. Only a handful of students, comparatively speaking, are given the benefit of preceptorial instruction by the Department.

Although we recognize the difficulties that might be involved in any attempt to apply the Preceptorial Method to the rank and file of Sophomores and Freshmen in the Department of Classics, it seems probable that an attempt to give the higher divisions preceptorial work of a kind similar to that of upper-class courses would result in quickened interest in the Classics.

We doubt whether the decrease in the number of assistant professors in the Department during the past five years can be accounted a serious evil if the Preceptorial Method is to be excluded from Freshman and Sophomore years; but it is not clear that the Department has done wisely in using the Method only with upper-classmen, unless it has been forced to do so by financial reasons. At least, we have been unable to get evidence that the limitation has been proved experimentally to be the wiser course. If, on the other hand, the Preceptorial Method is to be applied to the greatest advantage in the lower-class years, the

staff of preceptorial teachers in the Department will have to be considerably enlarged.

Somewhat different conditions seem to prevail in the Department of Philosophy. In 1906-07 this Department had 6 professors, 5 assistant professors, and 3 instructors for 360 students; in 1911-12 it had 7 professors, 3 assistant professors, and 2 instructors to 454 students.

While a loss in the teaching force is shown by the figures quoted above, the work of the Department is being carried on in a way that may be explained as follows: in the first place, the professors in the Department are now doing more preceptorial work than when the Method was introduced, and secondly, the preceptorial groups have increased in size. During the first two years of the application of the Method, the regular students of the Department were met singly in conference. During recent years the group-unit has grown in numbers until at the present time it exceeds in many cases the number five.

It should also be understood that the greater part of the work of instruction of Sophomore year has been done by assistant professors. Owing to the increase in numbers of the Sophomore class and the decrease in the number of assistant professors and instructors, the number of students in the Sophomore divisions has been doubled and trebled.

In the Modern Language Department there was a gain of one in the number of assistant professors, and a loss of two in the number of instructors, while the number of students on the rolls was increased by 100. This Department has for some years found itself undermanned, and therefore in some of its courses unable to apply the Preceptorial Method in the most efficient way. For example, it has been necessary in some courses to increase the size of preceptorial groups beyond the limit of best efficiency because the staff is not large enough to handle a class in smaller groups. In the elementary and intermediate courses the Preceptorial

Method has been discarded. Some members of the Department think that the work of these courses can be done as efficiently by the small division system. Others differ from this opinion, and they consented with considerable reluctance to discard the Method in these courses. If the Department should wish to reinstate the Preceptorial Method in these courses, it would be unable to do so with the present staff.

The efficiency of the Preceptorial Method in the English Department has been impaired in a different way. While the personnel of the English preceptorial staff has been practically stable during these six years, a serious drain on time and energy has been made by drafting members of the English Department for Hall work, so that men who should be teaching English Language and Literature have been engaged chiefly with debating teams in constructing arguments for or against tariff revision, or in devising interpretations of the Hay-Pauncefote treaty, or in framing speeches on similar economic or political topics. This work seems to us to lie quite outside the field of the Department of English Language and Literature, except in so far as its formal side is the special province of the Professor of Public Speaking and Debate.

3. *Decline in quality of conference work.* In addition to the external or administrative causes of impairment above outlined, there are others for which responsibility rests not on the Method as applied, but mainly on the individuals using it. There has come about a certain relaxation of standard in the work of some preceptors, manifesting itself in a number of ways, and due, we believe, to a number of causes.

It is the duty of your committee to state, in absolute frankness, its opinion that there has been, in some cases, a falling away from the ideals of preceptorial teaching that were so earnestly accepted at the inauguration of the

Method. In many cases preceptorial teaching has become stereotyped; assignments are spoken of in terms of "pages"; there is less attempt to vitalize the reading in a course, and arouse spontaneous, untrammelled interest in the subject as a whole. Certain preceptors have surrendered their proper influence, and, yielding to the pressure of lectures and examinations on the one hand, and to student inertia on the other, have accepted the office of driving a given number of students to do a definite, prescribed task—and have in many cases stopped there. In these cases conferences are little else than a preparation for a final examination. In others, while the end is not so narrowly limited, the spirit of the conference is destroyed by increasing the number of men in a group beyond the limits of efficiency. In still others the only method of teaching used is that of the "lecture," the "quiz," or the "recitation," and in no sense does real *conference* take place. In still other cases there is no longer any definite attempt to bring together, in one preceptorial group, students who, by reason of intellectual calibre and congeniality, obviously belong together; and who, when brought together, lift the preceptorial conference to a higher level of influence and result.

Finally, some preceptors deliberately crowd their teaching into two or three days of the week, by running schedules of several consecutive hours, making little or no effort to extend their influence beyond the stated times at which they meet their students, and performing at least a part of their preceptorial duty in drudging and jaded fashion, because of the exhaustion, both physical and mental, that many consecutive repetitions and long sequence of hours produce. Such a procedure, when deliberate, reveals a failure to appreciate the true spirit and possibility of preceptorial teaching, and also indicates a disregard for the measure of personal responsibility on which efficient preceptorial

teaching must depend, and for which there can be no substitute.

This decreased vitality of interest, this loss of spontaneity and initiative, this dulling of the sense of personal responsibility, on the part of a certain proportion of the preceptorial staff, seems to your Committee to imply, if uncorrected, grave danger for the future of the Method.

Although these transgressions of the spirit rather than the letter do not constitute a general abuse or misuse of the Method, and while it is granted that, at worst, the practices above mentioned are not customary, they are nevertheless frequent enough to affect the efficiency of the Method as a whole. For this reason, and not in any spirit of arbitrary criticism, we call attention to them.

Behind this relaxation of standard, where it occurs, there lie a number of causes, and some of them run deep. The more superficial causes are almost self-evident. The personnel of the preceptorial staff has, in part at least, changed, and new men have taken up preceptorial teaching with little definite instruction as to the administration of the Method. There has been no central preceptorial committee or other agency to explain to new men the working of the Method, and there has also been lacking any stated court of last resort to which could be brought perplexity and misunderstanding and doubt. The result has been that individuals have gone their own ways, and their paths have not always run parallel.

Other causes, however, lie deeper beneath the surface. Where, for instance, the preceptorial conference has become in any degree a coaching for the final examination, in some cases the fault may be in the preceptor. But in other cases the fault may lie in the character of the final examination itself. We believe that, just as the ideal of preceptorial teaching implies the teaching of a subject rather than the teaching of a course, so the examination should emphasize

the study of a subject by the student rather than the study of that particular portion, or particular aspect, of the subject which a particular lecturer may have emphasized. In other words, we believe that an examination should be made as searching as possible, but searching in the broad and fundamental truths of the subject. It is quite possible that by the character of the examination, particularly if it be confined closely to the lectures, a preceptor may be forced to "cover the ground" of the course, and may not, in any real sense, be free to teach the subject. For this reason we recommend in another place the report (see p. 54) that examinations be set by some other agent than either lecturer or preceptor, or if this be not feasible, by the lecturer and preceptors, or the lecturer and a committee of the preceptors in joint conference and consultation. We believe that this question of the kind of examination set is one of the utmost importance to the health and strength of the Preceptorial Method. For the examination seems the most frequent obstacle in the way of the preceptor's freedom to teach the subject in a broad and comprehensive way; and, if the preceptor is not free to teach his subject as he knows it, then the ideals of preceptorial teaching and the potentiality of the Method cannot be fully realized.

The preceptor is forced to look forward to the character of the final examination in justice to the men he is teaching. For in many ways the relation of the student to the University is still expressed by passing-marks, and by higher and lower grades. We believe it cannot be too strongly stated that the best preceptorial work absolutely implies a broad and fundamental examination in the subject rather than in the subject-matter of the lectures. At times the two might be nearly equivalent; at other times or in other courses, this equivalence might quite properly be absent. In short, we believe that where the preceptorial hour has

become a coaching hour the root of the evil is often to be found in the character of the final examination.

Secondly, the increase of a preceptorial group to a size that destroys, or even threatens, the conference spirit cannot be too strongly condemned. In some cases, preceptors have taken in the past, and are still taking, groups larger than they desire, because of the exigencies of their schedules. But constant vigilance should be exercised to avoid groups that defeat the ideals of the preceptorial conference.

Again, where the method of teaching used in the conference has become a "quiz," or recitation, this is not always to be explained by the preceptor's indolent acceptance of the easiest way, but by the fact that the group may be made up of dull and stolid students. The preceptorial conference cannot be, in the case of the poorest students, what it will be with the best (p. 47). To ask that is to ask a miracle. But it is likely that a partial remedy, at least, can be found in a transfer of students from one group to another until a group-division of the highest possible efficiency is obtained.

This brings us naturally to the fact that in some cases there is no longer any definite attempt on the part of the preceptor to bring together in single groups students who obviously belong together. This, we take it, was one of the most vital ideals in the Method at its inauguration. But it is an ideal that has been realized only partially, and in some cases preceptors now make a frankly arbitrary division of their students into this group or that, largely by schedule arrangement. The causes for this are many. In the first place, we are suffering from a short daily schedule. The loss of one hour a day, brought about two years ago by compression of the schedule, taken in connection with the Faculty ruling that lectures shall fall on the days beginning and ending the week, has resulted in a congestion of preceptorial conferences in the middle of the week and a re-

sulting difficulty in dealing with the students' schedules. Even the commendable practice of using evening hours does not sufficiently relieve the situation. It is often not possible to get certain desired men together in any one of a number of hours. This vitally affects the structure of preceptorial groups, and preceptors often have to be satisfied with the men they can get at a given hour. For this reason we advocate elsewhere (p. —) an extension of the daily schedule.

Outside the ordinary recitation periods the situation is little better. The extra-curriculum activities of the students have grown in number and degree of organization to a point where they confront the Preceptorial Method as an obstacle and a menace. This outside demand upon the time and energy of the students has visibly increased in the last decade or two. Your committee does not undervalue healthy sport or participation in other forms of normal and spontaneous student enterprise. But there is a definite limit to the extent to which these activities may be allowed to compete for the time and energy of students with the forces which guide and control their education. The real work of the student will be better done when that which is naturally play and recreation once more becomes indeed play and recreation, and not organized business.

Against all these influences and forces the conscientious preceptor is compelled to struggle. They form a problem that he must solve, or that must be solved for him, if the best possibilities of the Method are to be realized.

To sum up this chapter of criticism: we would express our appreciation of the high purpose that brought about the inauguration of the Preceptorial Method at Princeton, and our sense of the great generousities which have given it pecuniary support. It is, however, clear to us that the impairment described in the preceding pages is due to causes which may be re-stated as follows: the details of the

Method were not, and perhaps could not be, completely elaborated at the beginning; the Method has not been perfectly understood by some of the participants in it and has been misapplied by others; during its history not enough care has been taken to mold it and overcome defects as soon as they became apparent; the Method has not as yet received endowment adequate to its proper efficiency.

The problem of adequate endowment does not appear to lie within the province of your Committee, and we pass, therefore, directly to proposals for overcoming the defects in the present application of the Method.

Our investigation leads us to group the defects under the following heads:

(1) It has not offered adequate incentive or scope to men called to Princeton to do preceptorial work.

(2) It has not made the best use of the opportunity to develop our best undergraduates.

(3) It has not made best use of the opportunity to cultivate the personal relation and influence between teacher and student that lie at the heart of the Method.

(4) It has tended, in the hands of some preceptors, to become mechanical in its pedagogic application.

CHAPTER III

IMPROVEMENT OF EFFICIENCY

In approaching the question of improving the efficiency of the Method we have constantly kept before us the greater potentiality of the Method which experience has revealed, and which was not recognized at its inception. We believe that this potentiality can be realized, and the shortcomings in the present application of the Method rectified, by the adoption of the following proposals:

- (A) Standardizing salaries and promotions ;
- (B) Restoring as fast as circumstances will allow the strength of the preceptorial staff ;
- (C) Reaching a clear understanding as to the necessary administrative machinery of the Method, and a unanimity as to fundamental practices ;
- (D) Adopting certain general suggestions for the more effective application of the Method.

Before taking up these proposals, certain general comments are necessary.

Frankly, most of the assistant professors who have left Princeton in the last six years have gone elsewhere because there seemed to be here no prospect of promotion in rank, or increase in salary. They thought, and many who have remained are of the opinion that the Method as now administered does not give the assistant professor proper progressive advancement and emolument ; in some Departments it has not allowed him the freedom necessary for the best work, and he has not found the co-operation he had expected. It should be said, and it cannot be said too

emphatically, that the Preceptorial Staff as a body believes heartily in the Method and is cordially in sympathy with any plans that may aid in making the Method more efficient and, in achievement, more commensurate with its great possibilities. Nevertheless, it should also be said that the failure to provide for the future of the assistant professor has, as was pointed out earlier in these pages (p. 17), resulted in a feeling of doubt as to the permanency of the Method, which has in some instances naturally affected the spirit and efficiency of preceptorial teaching. In some cases too, a sense of injustice has been engendered in the past by the discovery that salaries are not standardized, and that advances in salary have been made in some Departments when it was declared impossible to increase smaller salaries in other Departments.

Finally, it has been felt, and is still felt, that sometimes there has not been enough co-operation between the professorial lecturer and his preceptors; that the Method has not been receiving from some professorial members of the Faculty the support it deserves; and that these members of the Faculty consider preceptorial teaching a distinctly inferior grade of work. They seem to regard preceptorial teaching as a kind of hack work, good enough for tyros, but less efficient than lecturing, and requiring ability and learning much inferior to that of the lecturer or the conductor of a course. Nothing threatens the Method so gravely as this lack of sympathetic interest.

We do not wish to be misunderstood as making here a sweeping criticism. On the contrary, the Method owes much of its success to the attitude of co-operation generally held by lecturers toward the preceptors. We trust that the exceptions are the result of misapprehension on the part of the lecturers involved; and we suggest that preceptorial work in courses other than those they conduct would possibly bring them familiarity with certain pre-

ceptorial problems which would otherwise not come to their knowledge.

In making our proposals for the improvement of the Preceptorial Method we are aware that the most important of them call for increase of expenditure. This is inevitable if the ideals of the Method are to be realized to the most profitable degree. We have found no other way of considering the problems before us than to proceed upon the assumption that the needs of the University in this matter can be promptly supplied, and that she may at once enter upon a period of highest efficiency.

If, on the other hand, the necessary funds are not for the present forthcoming, there remain certain of the following proposals which should be carried into effect, and could be without increase of the budget.

We believe that the Method should be applied more extensively than at present throughout the four undergraduate years, and we hope that this may be accomplished. If retrenchment should, however, be necessary, it would seem wiser to restrict the application to the two upper-class years, that what power we have may be employed to better effect there, than to spread it through the four years, without satisfactory effect at any point.

In the next place, it may perhaps be objected that certain other proposals tending to strengthen and dignify the preceptorial function will therefore tend to weaken the professorial function. In reply to such an objection we beg to suggest that this opinion would seem to us to reveal an unfortunate mental confusion between rank and function, and to show that the person so objecting does not clearly understand the preceptorial idea. It is our belief that the preceptorial function should be exercised by all members of the Faculty above instructorial rank in Departments using the Method. Dignifying and strengthening this general function will, in our estimation, therefore affect the whole

body of men doing preceptorial work, and cannot fairly be stigmatized as an exaltation of one part of that body at the expense of another.

A—Standardizing Salaries and Promotions

We believe that the first step toward improving the efficiency of the Method is that of standardizing the salaries and the periods of service of instructors and assistant professors, with automatic increase of salary up to a certain point. It is our opinion that the salary of an instructor should start at \$1200 with automatic increase up to a certain point—*c.g.* \$1600. In general it is to be expected that the ranks of our assistant professors will be recruited to a considerable degree from our own instructors, who have acquired some experience with the Preceptorial Method. By offering a better salary to instructors we should be attracting better preceptorial timber. As one of the letters to the Committee puts it, in speaking of assistant professors, "the highest skill and finish in preceptorial teaching will never be attained in Princeton until the best young men who have served their apprenticeship here are induced to remain by a salary and rank which will enable them to live normally and comfortably and to maintain their self-respect." We suggest that there is every reason to begin this inducement with the instructorial staff. Further we suggest that the salary of an assistant professor should in each case begin at \$2000 with automatic increase up to a certain point—*c.g.* \$2750.

We feel that the second step toward improving and maintaining the efficiency of the Method is that of standardizing promotions. Since the Preceptorial Method of instruction is as dependent on experience as on personality and scholarship, a large constant change in the ranks of those doing preceptorial work is not desirable. A certain amount of change is desirable; but there should always be

a dominantly large residue of men on the Faculty whose familiarity with the workings of the Method is of long and intimate standing, and whose gifts of inspiring and training the undergraduate have been recognized not only theoretically by allowing them the fullest freedom in the exercise of those gifts, but also practically by promotions and accompanying increase of salary. Such men will be able to send into the Graduate School the pick of their undergraduates and there carry them on to more intensive study. Under such a system of promotion, therefore, we do not feel that when an assistant professor, brought here to do the sort of teaching for which he is thought to be specially gifted, is promoted, he should necessarily give up the preceptorial function as his main duty, nor on the other hand do we believe that promotion to a professorship necessarily implies lecturing.

To supply a natural channel of promotion for those men whose preceptorial service and accomplishment make them worthy of recognition, we advocate the establishment of professorships carrying chiefly preceptorial function, but also all the dignity and emolument of the lecturing professorships.

When therefore an assistant professor has for a period of years been receiving the highest possible salary under the plan already outlined, we believe that there should come, at some fixed time, a definite consideration of his past service and future prospects, the result of which will be either an opportunity to seek service elsewhere before he has grown too old to make the change, or a continuance as assistant professor at a somewhat higher but final salary, or a promotion to a preceptorial or a lecturing professorship.

We believe very earnestly that there should also be, at some fixed time, a definite consideration of the instructor's prospects, with corresponding results.

A further step toward standardization would be taken by

the establishment of a system of automatic sabbatical leave. We advocate the establishment of such a system. It is unnecessary to rehearse here the arguments in support of such an automatic system. The need and advantage of automatic sabbatical leave, and the fruit it bears in study and research, have been widely recognized among American colleges and universities. We would advocate, therefore, giving to every professor and assistant professor the choice between a year's freedom every seventh year at full pay or a half year every three and a half years at full pay.

B—Restoration of Strength of Staff of Assistant Professors

1. *Appointment.* We believe that vacancies in the preceptorial staff as they occur should be filled by men of the best obtainable experience and personal qualities (see p. 12). It is our opinion that insufficient care has been taken in appointments to make sure that appointees have the necessary personal qualities, experience, and scholarship.

We believe, further, that, in the appointment of assistant professors for preceptorial work, Princeton should continue her present policy of drawing from as wide a range as possible. We have already stated (see p. 36) the expectation that the ranks of our assistant professors will be recruited to a considerable degree from our own instructors who have acquired some experience with the Preceptorial Method, and who have proved themselves fit for such promotion. Other things being equal, the appointment of such men to vacant assistant professorships will best serve the interests of the Method. Nevertheless the advantages accruing from the infusion of new blood are not to be forgotten. The ideals of the Preceptorial Method cannot be injured by the accession, from time to time, of totally new men who bring to Princeton the training, experience, and ideas of a variety of institutions, provided they are carefully advised while forming their acquaintance with

the Method. It would be wise to make the first term of their appointment a tentative one, and fairly brief; and if they do not prove successful in this special sort of teaching their first appointment should not be renewed.

2. *Conference work not to be done by instructors.* We believe that, except in rare cases, conference work should not be done by instructors. The practice of appointing an additional instructor instead of an assistant professor when a vacancy occurs in the ranks of assistant professors, and of assigning these instructors to preceptorial conference work means necessarily a weakening of the Preceptorial Method of teaching. Instructors of suitable experience may of course be broken in, with a view to ultimate promotion to full preceptorial duties and the rank and salary of assistant professors; but to plunge a new instructor into a full schedule of preceptorial hours is as unfair to him as it is fatal to the Method.

In the year 1911-12 the preceptorial staff in History and Politics, as distinct from Economics, was made up of four assistant professors and eight instructors. Of the latter eight, five were new appointees, and of the other three the maximum length of service was less than two years. In this same Department it has happened in more than one instance that an instructor, in his first year of service at Princeton, and without previous teaching experience, has been given preceptorial work with members of the senior class in subjects of considerable difficulty, semi-technical in character, and covering fields of knowledge unfamiliar in part at least to the instructor himself. It need hardly be said that under such conditions, so different from the preceptorial ideal, the higher possibilities of the Preceptorial Method cannot be realized.

It is understood that, in the past, when instructors have taken the place of assistant professors in preceptorial work, the substitution has been the result of financial necessity.

But we are of the deliberate opinion that the makeshift method of solving our budgetary difficulties involves lowering our standards in a most insidious way, and is fraught with danger to the Preceptorial Method as a whole. We believe that it would have been better for the preservation of the efficiency of the Preceptorial Method had conference work been curtailed where the proper staffing of it could not be afforded; and we believe that hereafter curtailment should be exercised when it is a choice between that and inferior appointments, especially for work in the upper-class years.

3. *Lecturing by assistant professors.* A minority of the preceptorial staff feels that the lack of opportunity to lecture or to conduct courses will always prove a grave hindrance in maintaining a high quality of personnel in the preceptorial staff. As, however, practically all assistant professors are offering graduate courses, and a large number are already conducting undergraduate courses in whole or in part, the point would not seem to be well taken. The proposed system of sabbatical leave would, however, each year give assistant professors who wish it the opportunity to substitute for absent lecturers. The individual Departments might also arrange a system of rotation by which different men, some of whom would be assistant professors desiring to lecture, might give the same course in different years; but this seems rather a matter for settlement by each Department. Courses of public University lectures offer still another possible solution. While maintaining that teaching by conference is not work of lower grade than teaching by lecture, the difference being one of kind rather than grade, we recommend that opportunity to lecture be given to those who desire it.

4. *Dignity.* The criticism that the Preceptorial Method, as at present organized, makes Princeton a training-school for the faculties of other institutions would have little basis

of truth if the dignity of the preceptorial function were properly safeguarded, as is the tutorial function at Oxford. Besides the fundamentally necessary standardization of salaries and promotions already mentioned, the safeguards of dignity are, in our opinion, the following:

(a) *Liberty in handling conference work.* Preceptors should be allowed the widest liberty in the way in which they handle their work. Excepting the few necessary rules of practice which should be followed by all for the sake of administrative uniformity, and which are specified in a subsequent section of this report (p. 43), each preceptor should be free to obey his own judgment and preferences, restricted, if at all, only by the limitations made necessary by the content of the course. He should not be compelled to follow a fixed weekly schedule of reading, although he may do so. He is responsible for the manner in which his students master the subject of a course, and he should be trusted to carry his men through that course in his best possible way, and to their best intellectual advantage. No one who is unworthy of this trust should be appointed to so responsible a position. Any one so appointed must, in order to preserve his independence and to obtain the best results, enjoy as complete liberty of method as possible.

(b) *Limitation of schedule.* An assistant professor doing preceptorial work should not be overloaded with conference and class-room hours, but should have the same leisure for research that is accorded to the members of those Departments where the Method is not used. It is exceedingly important that more consideration be given than at present to the scholarly pursuits of members of the Faculty who are in the earlier or the middle years of their activity. For the sake of the University's reputation, no less than their own, they must have time for independent work. Only in very unusual cases has a man who is overburdened with teaching and administrative duties the energy to fulfil

his possibilities as a scholar. There is grave danger in our present situation that men of real ability will go to waste. The best teaching, both of graduate and undergraduate students, will in the long run be done by men who are ripe in experience and scholarship. Leisure for study and writing is essential to the proper development of all members of an academic Faculty.

5. *Dropping function-name "preceptor."* We believe that the function-name "preceptor" should be dropped from the Faculty list in the University Catalogue, but should be retained in all descriptions of courses in the Catalogue and departmental prospectuses, *e.g.*:

Chinese History. Senior elective. Lecturer: Mr. B. Preceptors: Messrs. A. B. C. X. Y. and Z.

We believe, as already stated, that all members of the University Faculty above the grade of instructor, who possess fitness for such work, should to a greater or less degree as circumstances admit, share in the preceptorial function; but we do not believe that the assistant professors doing preceptorial work should, by title, as printed in the Faculty list, be marked out as a separate and distinct class in the University Faculty. There are two reasons against this practice. First, within our borders such segregation tends to prevent a proper unifying of faculty rank, producing as it does a confusion of rank with function. Secondly, outside our borders the word "preceptor" is misunderstood and variously interpreted, in many cases working injustice to the men who hold such title. In the announcement of courses in the University Catalogue and elsewhere, the function-name "preceptor" should be used to designate all men doing preceptorial work. But the title "preceptor" as printed in the Faculty list, which is a list of rankings, should, in our opinion, be abolished.

6. *Hall work and the English Department.* In regard to the training in argumentation and debate, and the gen-

eral revival of interest in the two Halls, the Committee feels that a work is being done of sufficient importance to warrant distinct and careful attention. We do not believe that the best interests of this work, or of the Halls, can be served by assigning to members of the English Department a task for which they cannot be, in the very nature of the case, specially qualified. The general direction of all work in argumentation and debate falls naturally in the immediate province of the Professor of Public Speaking and Debate, and we believe that he should be given such specially qualified assistants as the work may demand.

We urge therefore that the debating work in both Whig and Clio Halls be completely unified under the Professor of Public Speaking and Debate, who shall be responsible for the coaching of debaters on the formal side, and who shall be assisted, on the side of political and economic subject-matter, by members of the Department of History, Politics, and Economics. If, however, it should be found that this impairs the preceptorial efficiency of that Department, then the Department should be sufficiently manned to meet the requirement.

We urge, further, that the Freshman course in Argumentation and Debate be carried on for both Halls by the Professor of Public Speaking and Debate assisted by two or more specially qualified instructors appointed for the purpose, but that assistant professors of English be not drafted into this work. In order to unify the work in Argumentation and Debate, it would be desirable, if possible, that the Professor of Public Speaking and Debate be made ex-officio an honorary member of the Hall of which he is not already a member. This, however, while extremely desirable, is not indispensable to the reorganization we urge.

C.—Administrative Machinery and Fundamental Practices

In offering proposals for improving the efficiency of the

Method along its purely administrative lines, we wish to emphasize our belief that the less machinery there is attached to the Method the better. But a certain amount of system is not only advisable but necessary. There may be many ways, for instance, of managing preceptorial conferences, but there should be only one practice in regard to recording or not recording, at the Registrar's Office, absences from conference. Because certain questions like this were not at the beginning made the subject of definite official consideration, resolution, and record, a number of confusions and unfortunate practices have arisen, which in their effect have worked injury to the Method.

This phase of the matter will be most easily approached if we suppose that the Method is about to be installed; we may then lay down such necessary rules of procedure as should be observed by all the Departments using the Method, and offer general suggestions which in our opinion, if adopted, would improve the Method's efficiency. Some of these rules, it will be noticed, are already operative.

1. *Assignment of students.* The lecturers and the preceptors in any course should meet at the opening of the term to discuss the preceptorial reading and to arrange the groups. Continuity should, as far as possible, be the accepted principle of relation between student and preceptor from course to course and year to year. The original plan expected a student to report to the same preceptor in all his courses in a given Department. This has not proven feasible. But a certain amount of continuity is feasible and desirable. It leads to better mutual understanding, to closer acquaintance, and to better work. It is, of course, acknowledged that this continuity of relation between preceptor and student can be best secured in Departments having large upper-class elective courses, and that in Departments where the upper-class elective courses are small many difficulties stand in the way. Your Committee, never-

theless, considers this question of continuity an important one, and would recommend that, as far as possible, the method used in assigning students to preceptors be one adapted to secure this result.

From this standpoint we believe that the method, already in use in two Departments, of entrusting the assignment of students in all preceptorial courses to a central committee is an admirable one. Such a committee can accumulate and preserve records of a student's previous academic affiliations, and this is not easily possible in the case of an individual or committee acting for a separate course.

2. *Changes in assignments.* In cases where a change from one preceptor to another is desired by a student, the transference should be granted only when it has been clearly demonstrated that the best work cannot be expected from the student without such change. The committee in charge of assignments should be a court of resort in such cases, and the student should have sympathetic hearing. Except for an excellent reason, however, changes should be discouraged.

3. *The lecturer and preceptorial conference.* The lecturer should take his full share of preceptorial groups. He thus keeps in close touch with the preceptorial side of the course and is better able to judge of the relation of his lectures to the preceptorial reading.

4. *Size and composition of groups.* It is considered advantageous that a preceptorial group shall consist of not less than four nor of more than seven members. There can be no definite rule. In general, five has proved the ideal number. In the composition of a group, the principle of homogeneity should be carefully applied. If possible, the individuals should be of about the same standing. The theory that one or two high-stand or brilliant men in a group of dullards will leaven the group seems to be unsupported by experience; in such groups the dullards usu-

ally corrupt the high-stand men, or else rely on them to bear the brunt of the conference.

An equally, if not a more, important consideration in the composition of a group is that of congeniality and a parity of mental alertness among its members. The principle of continuity is often of assistance here; men who in a previous year or term have been together in preceptorial work ordinarily form a better group than one made up of strangers, and therefore should, if they desire, be kept together.

We realize that the carrying out of this recommendation is beset with difficulties of schedule, but we feel very strongly that it should be universally borne in mind when groups are being formed.

Especially brilliant men should be treated separately as provided in a subsequent paragraph (p. 50).

5. *Co-operation in planning reading.* At the beginning of the term, the lecturer should invariably inform the preceptors definitely as to the ground he proposes to cover; he should indicate the scope of his lectures and co-operate with the preceptors in choosing the books to be read. This list of books should always be open to amendment by the preceptors, who should have entire liberty to read as they please in quantity, method, and authors. Care should be exercised that the course is not so planned as to require an undue amount of reading. In some courses students have found it impossible to digest the mass of reading required.

6. *Conduct of the conference.* After groups have been formed and the general plan of work drawn up, each preceptor will meet his groups for conference ordinarily once a week. Conferences should as far as possible be held on the middle days of the week, leaving at least Mondays and Saturdays free for lecture or class-room work, as required by the Faculty resolution of October 3, 1910.

Without intending to define exactly what a conference *should* be—for this varies according to circumstances—nevertheless it is possible to point out what an ideal conference should *not* be, and to suggest the lines along which by common consent it may with the best results in the average case be conducted. It must be admitted that no two conferences, even with the best students, are alike; all groups cannot be handled in exactly the same way even though the assignment of reading be the same. According to the capability of the students, the quality of the conference will vary, and the less their ability, the lower the quality will fall; in such cases there must of necessity be more elementary “teaching” done by the preceptor, and less “conference” between him and the student; the conference must savor somewhat of an informal recitation. In general, however, and especially with high-stand groups, it must be remembered that the conference itself is, after all, not the most valuable feature of the Method. The chief purpose of the Method is to induce the student to work for himself, with no idea of “reciting” on his work, but rather with the idea that he will meet his preceptor in a conference at which the result of that work will be considered, his understanding of the reading he has done will be discussed and clarified, and the reports he may have written will be criticized.

The conference, therefore, should not be merely a “quiz” on the reading, nor should it become what has been labelled a “monologue” on the part of the preceptor. The word “conference,” taken in its most obvious sense, is its best definition.

This does not mean, however, that the preceptor should *never* quiz a group; nor does it mean that he may never take the hour into his own hands, and use it or any part of it for an informal lecture. An exceptional assignment may very properly require a certain amount of close question-

ing; but a preceptor must not make a practice of using his conferences merely to find out whether his students have read the assignment or not. Such a practice is not preceptorial teaching. Again, the character of a particular assignment, or the mental attitude of the members of a group in approaching a particular assignment, may very properly demand that the preceptor explain away fundamental difficulties or supply a necessary background; and often this can be done most effectively in the informality of a conference hour where the student may interrupt to ask questions or to raise issues, as he cannot do in the formal class-room lecture. Like the "quiz," however, this manner of conducting a conference, while it has its distinct place and value, should be adopted only when special circumstances make it necessary. Ordinarily, then, the preceptor must first ascertain whether the reading assigned has been covered, and secondly in what manner it has been covered. When they have not done the reading, students almost invariably are perfectly frank in admitting it. The way in which the reading has been done may be ascertained by judicious questioning as to the student's opinion of statements made or ideas advanced by the author under consideration, as to obscurities in the author's meaning, as to parallels in other reading, *etc.*, *etc.* Constant endeavor should be made to induce the student to use his experience gained from other reading, to form opinions, and to express them. These opinions may be discussed, agreement with other opinions, or dissent therefrom, may be advanced, fallacies may be pointed out, childish notions may be corrected—the whole object being to get the student to think and talk straight. Loquacious or combative members must be repressed, and timid or taciturn men drawn out. Prolonged debate between preceptor and student is to be avoided, but discussion between members of the group should be encouraged, the preceptor keeping the discussion

within limits. These discussions may be allowed to run whither they will, if only they are genuine discussions. It does no harm sometimes to allow the discussion to wander away from the main assignment, for it is not a lesson that is being recited, and the preceptor is not under contract to "cover" a certain amount of ground or a certain number of pages every week; the covering of ground with a view to future examination is the very least of his objects; he is to help his students to master a subject rather than a course. Here again the judgment of the preceptor must be exercised.

7. *Written work.* Unquestionably more written work in the form of prepared reports should be required than heretofore. Such work involves an exercise for which there is no substitute, and without which a student's acquisitions are on the whole disordered and ephemeral. Whatever his discoveries, he takes real possession of them by defining and formulating them, and this is best accomplished through writing.

This work has been neglected by most Departments, perhaps because it involves much labor and the exertion of a preceptor's best skill and judgment; but where such effort is made, it always pays. To handle this work successfully the preceptor must deal individually with each student, especially with each abler student. It is not so much the frequency or the amount of writing that counts, as the care with which each piece is done. The preceptor should advise the student in his choice of a subject appropriate to his proficiency, tastes, and ability. He should suggest the right reading, perhaps meeting him for his conference at the library, or in any other way watching the progress of his work. Criticism of the report should, whatever its subject, deal with style and form as well as with content; and any final criticism should follow as soon as possible after the completion of the report. Experience has shown that in

the conference over written work the preceptor can actually teach his student more, and gain closer personal acquaintance with him than in any other way.

8. *Direction of abler students.* Groups or individuals of superior ability should be handled in a distinct and special way. They should be led to read more intensively. It will be wholly proper to have individual students do special reading under the preceptor's guidance, report to him in person and in writing on special topics assigned for investigation, and hand in these reports from time to time for criticism as the preceptor directs. Such students may be introduced to bibliographical method, to the use of the library, to a comparison of original material, to elementary research. A student doing this kind of work would be excused from the ordinary weekly conference, reporting only when and where the preceptor directs. If he abuses this privilege or in any way fails to use its opportunities, his preceptor will put him back at once into the weekly schedule of conferences on the assigned reading.

9. *Fewer courses for abler students.* Such a method of intensive work, however, carries with it an inevitable corollary. At present even our best students cannot do full justice to five courses. Work so scattered must at some point be superficial; our best students frankly admit that they have to slight at least one of their courses in order to get the time necessary for the others. As the corollary to the plan proposed, therefore, we recommend that students of first-rate ability should not elect more than four courses.

Such a reduction would, under proper guidance, encourage picked students to master a few subjects in a way at present impossible; it would enable them to do more work in these subjects, and do it more thoroughly; their studies, which at present run to breadth and superficiality, would gain in depth and concentration.

The adoption of this proposal would not mean any de-

cline of standards. On the contrary, such a plan, carried out by preceptors adequately equipped and properly appreciative of the higher opportunity of the Preceptorial Method, would result in the raising of standards. Work done in fewer courses, and under the above system, would be of higher grade, of greater originality and thoroughness; and it would be done in a much more useful way, for it would be made to supply some training in method, together with some of the discipline of concentrated accomplishment. From such students our honor men ought to be chosen.

It has been objected that we should have difficulty in persuading even our better men to approach their work in this fashion. But it is only necessary to point out that such an approach will be to their personal advantage; for, failing to fall in with the spirit of this plan, they would be sent down to lower groups, and would lose not only their high rating, but also the measure of individual freedom that this plan advocates.

Moreover, we are confident that the stimulus given, and the opportunities offered, would make the plan popular with the picked men for whom it is devised.

Finally, it would not, like honors courses, be open to the objection of creating a "pass" standard upon which bright but lazy men could indolently decline.

Obviously, the examination at the end of the course will have to take into consideration men of this higher type who have been doing advanced work. The use of alternative questions as recommended in a later paragraph (p. 54) would meet their case.

10. *Exchanges between Departments.* There would seem to be no very good reason why, in the case of our abler students, interplay and exchange of preceptorial reading and conference between Departments should not be encouraged and developed, and receive full credit. For instance, Mr. A. is in the Department of History, Politics,

and Economics. He is listening to lectures, let us say, on "Italy in the Renaissance." Why should he not be permitted by his preceptor in this course,—indeed why should he not be induced—to do preceptorial reading in part at least on Italian Art of the Renaissance under the direction of a preceptor in the Department of Art, and receive full credit therefor? Similarly, a student in the Department of English taking a course in the literature of the seventeenth century in England might advantageously be allowed to read, if he is qualified, in French Literature of the seventeenth century. In like manner literary and philosophical courses may interplay. Such interplay and exchange of preceptorial reading would, if heartily and fairly adopted, do away largely with the regrettable undergraduate view, springing primarily from the general "scrappiness" of American higher education and fostered perhaps by our system of departmental studies, that each course is an entity complete in itself. This would by degrees bring about in the undergraduate's mind that interpenetration or welding together of the various subjects with which he deals each week, and emphasize an important aspect of real education.

For such able men, also, the final examination paper should contain alternative questions as recommended in a subsequent paragraph (p. 54).

II. *Absences.* A student should understand that he is expected to attend every conference, and that he may be absent only for necessary and unavoidable reasons. He should give a satisfactory explanation of every absence, and give it in advance if possible, remembering that his relation to his preceptor is personal, and that the matter of preceptorial appointments is regarded as such. Failure to keep his preceptorial appointments will ordinarily affect his final standing.

Absences from preceptorial conference should not be recorded at the Registrar's Office. But a preceptor will

keep private note of such absences, which necessarily will be taken into account in the final judgment of a student's work.

12. *Debarment.* If a student's work for his preceptor is unsatisfactory, he must be reported to the Department by that preceptor for debarment from examination. While the preceptor is, of course, the sole judge of the quality of the student's work, nevertheless it may not be out of place to suggest that a student's work is unsatisfactory when it does not represent his best effort and ability, or when he persistently neglects assigned reading, or does not complete it, or when he repeatedly, and without acceptable explanation, absents himself from scheduled conferences on the reading. The acceptability of an explanation is a purely personal matter between the preceptor and the student and must therefore be left to the former's discretion; it cannot be made a matter of legislation. If the preceptor does not debar, the conference work of the student in question must be considered satisfactory and therefore above passing—*i.e.* it must be considered as of a grade of 50 per cent or better. Any student with a preceptorial standing below passing must by that fact be debarred from examination, and be marked as conditioned.

Here again there is no appeal from the preceptor's decision. There can be no doubt that the dignity and authority of the Preceptorial Method are attacked at once if appeals from a preceptor's decisions are even entertained by any other officers or committees of the University. But it is believed that any preceptor will at a student's request gladly review his decision.

13. *Examinations.* Students of distinct merit, who have been doing special reading, might well on recommendation of their preceptors, be excused from examination, or be examined only on portions of the paper, or submit theses in lieu of examinations. Such a privilege would be of in-

estimable value to the authority of the Method. But as long as a Faculty rule passed October 14, 1904 requires terminal examinations in every course, we recommend:

(a) that the character of the question-papers follow the lines to be laid down in the next paragraph.

The failure to appreciate the intimate connection between the character of the examination questions and the highest achievement in preceptorial work, and the discouragement due to this failure, have been discussed in an earlier part of this report (p. 19). To relieve these conditions, we believe that examination questions should conform to two criteria. They must, in the first place, test the student's grasp of a *subject* rather than merely his knowledge of the content of a particular textbook or a particular "course" of lectures; they must call for an understanding of the relation between things rather than for any catalogue of facts. In the second place, they must afford the student the opportunity to prove his intimate and accurate knowledge of those aspects of the subject which he has studied most intensively under the direction of his preceptor. Clearly, therefore, a free use of alternative questions is an indispensable part of such a plan.

From the above statement may be inferred our conception of examinations under the Preceptorial Method. Their purpose is not to find out whether a student has acquired a mass of facts, (which any keen-witted student can do overnight), but rather whether he has caught and assimilated the intent and meaning of the "course" as a presentation of a *subject*, analyzed and systematized by the lectures, and developed and enriched by his preceptorial reading. Examinations framed on these lines would, in our opinion, do more than anything else can, to break up the present pernicious practice of "cramming" by means of a syllabus, as against the perfectly legitimate "review" for examination.

(b) We recommend that the question-papers be written

either by a third party (neither lecturer nor preceptors), or jointly by lecturer and preceptors, or by a committee of the lecturer and preceptors.

The ideal method is the first of these three. A permanent Board of University Examiners is probably an impossibility under our organization; but the advantages of such an institution may be secured to a very large extent by putting into operation a plan whereby the papers would be set by departmental boards of examiners, *i.e.*, the paper in a given course would be set by a member, or by members, of the Department, who are not teaching in that course. These examiners would be appointed at the opening of the year, and would serve for the year. They would also read the papers, as provided in a subsequent section (p. 57).

The advantages of this plan are (1) greater likelihood of adherence to the lines already laid down for the framing of the papers; (2) absolute impartiality; and (3) greater freedom to teach the *subject* rather than the "course," when the preceptors engaged know that the examination will be set by an entirely disinterested party.

Under the second and third methods of framing the papers, (*viz.*, jointly by lecturer and preceptors, or by a committee of the lecturer and preceptors), the paper should be the result of *joint consultation* and *thorough discussion*. And by this we mean a far more earnest and effective procedure than that of merely asking preceptors to hand tentative questions to the lecturer, who includes them in the paper or not, as he pleases. This method, which tends to become perfunctory, is already followed in some courses, although it seems to be a violation of the spirit of a Faculty rule on the subject. We mean serious and genuine consultation and discussion, in the effort to produce a paper shaped after the spirit of our definition of an examination under the Preceptorial Method.

(c) Allusion has just been made to a Faculty rule on

the framing of examination papers. This rule, passed January 15, 1906, requires that the examination paper in each course be set by those who have conducted the course, and forbids the exhibition of the paper, before the examination, to preceptors for their criticism, preceptors who have taken part in conducting the course being excepted. The rule further requires that, after the examination, the groups and conditions be discussed in conference by those who have taken part in instructing the students in the course, and that no condition be finally imposed without confirmation by the conference; and it ends by requiring that at such conference the questions set in the examination be submitted to discussion in the light of the results of the examination.

We recommend the amendment of this rule. As it reads at present, it implies that, after conditions and grades have been assigned by the reader or readers of the answer-books, discussion shall ensue; and it properly provides that no condition shall stand unless confirmed by the conference. Its failure, however, to provide that the grades likewise shall be open to revision at the conference has led to the inference that the grades are not so open—an inference which, while perhaps warranted by the phraseology of the rule, is nevertheless unfortunate, and injurious to the best interests of the Preceptorial Method. Furthermore, the rule provides for discussion of the examination paper only after the examination, whereas we believe that the most useful time for that discussion is when the paper is being framed. Under the proposed system of departmental examiners a discussion of the paper at its framing would be ill-advised; but, under the other two methods suggested, a full discussion at that time is both inevitable and indispensable.

(d) We have already recommended the free use of alternative questions in general. For those students who have done special reading of the sort suggested on pages

50, 51, and 52 alternative questions will be necessary. Such questions must, of course, count as of proportionately equal value with the rest of the paper.

(e) The answer-books should be read by the framers of the examination paper, *i.e.* either by a third party (the departmental examiners), or jointly by the lecturer and the preceptors, or by the examining committee of the lecturer and preceptors. It is essential that the reading be done in collaboration in order that standardization and equity may be served, and that each student may share in the generousities and severities of the individual readers. It is important that no reader should mark the papers written by members of his own preceptorial groups.

14. *Grades and grading.* A preceptor should not keep a minute grading system; anything like mechanical classroom marking of daily recitations is to be carefully avoided. But a preceptor should endeavor to form definite impressions of the work his men are doing from week to week, and he will probably find himself best checked by recording, *after the conference and never during it*, the performance of his men in rough categories, such as "very good," "good," "fair," "poor." As the term progresses and he becomes better acquainted with his men, he will find his impressions of their work changing materially; but after experience, he should be able at the end of the term to approximate almost to a group their general ranking. The point to be borne in mind is that during the term he should keep only the most general records.

In computing the final term grade of a student, his conference record, his class-room record, and his examination record should all be taken into account. His conference record will be assigned by his preceptor; his examination record will be ascertained by the result of the examination. His class-room record may be more difficult to ascertain. In courses consisting of two lectures and one conference a

week there will be no so-called class-room record, unless tests or other written work have been required in connection with the lecture hours, in which case the results of these tests and written work will be the class-room record; in courses consisting of one lecture, one class-room exercise, and one conference a week, the class-room record will be the result of the weekly exercise and such tests and written work as may be required in connection with the class-room hour; in courses consisting of two class-room exercises and one conference a week, the class-room record will be the result of the two weekly exercises and of such tests and written work as may be required in connection with the class-room hours.

Under whatever arrangement of exercises the course be given, it is vital to the maintenance of the efficiency of the Preceptorial Method *that the final comparative value of the conference grade shall never be less than the sum of the other values.* We feel that, if the Preceptorial Method is to be applied with full success, the bulk of the student's work must be the work he does for his preceptor. One of the few resolutions of the Faculty touching the Preceptorial Method (January 15, 1906) definitely implies this idea by stating that in preceptorial courses greater weight must be given to the term record than to the examination record in passing or conditioning a student. This rule should be amended to cover the grouping as well as the passing or conditioning of a student. If his work is not done to his preceptor's satisfaction, he is peremptorily debarred from examination, regardless of his class-room record. If admitted to examination, he is conceded to have attained at least a passing grade in his preceptor's estimation. His conference work is thus an absolutely indispensable part of his term endeavor; it is the *sine qua non* of his term standing. It is true that by Faculty resolution (passed December 19, 1904) the statement of any marking system

was stricken from the University Catalogue, and it is alleged that now there is no such thing as a definite passing grade. But here it seems to us that theory and practice are at odds. As long as all Departments using the Preceptorial Method adhere to groups, rankings, honors, and their concomitant debarments, conditions, and failures, we must admit a definite passing mark.

We recommend, therefore, that in computing a final term grade the following comparative values shall be adhered to:

- (a) In courses consisting of two lectures and one conference a week the values shall be conference 3, examination 2. If tests are held (and there should be two or more), or written work in connection with the lectures is required during the term, and thus a class-room record is established, the values shall be conference 2, class-room 1, examination 1.
- (b) In courses consisting of two class-room exercises and one conference a week the values shall be conference 2, class-room 1, examination 1.
- (c) In courses consisting of 1 lecture, 1 class-room exercise, and 1 conference a week the values shall be conference 2, class-room 1, examination 1.

It may happen occasionally that a mechanical computation of grade will result in a higher or a lower final grade than a student, in his preceptor's judgment, deserves. A preceptor may therefore lower or raise a final grade as his judgment sees fit. He shall have the ultimate decision of the final grade, although it should receive the confirmation of the post-examination conference already provided for by the Faculty rule of January 15, 1906.

15. *Conference hours and vacations.* In general, while we do not think that the changes of scheduled conference hours should be regulated by as rigid a rule as that of class recitations or lectures, we believe that preceptors should avoid, except in unusual instances, any such change

immediately before or after a vacation, especially if it means that the conference will fall within the week preceding, or the week succeeding that for which it was originally scheduled.

Such a practice increases the number of weekly exercises in a given course for the particular week in question, violates the general rules under which courses are administered, and produces congestion.

D.—General Suggestions

In this final section we offer a few general suggestions which, if adopted, we believe would improve the efficiency of the Preceptorial Method.

1. *Personal relations with students.* The personal relation which now exists in many cases between student and preceptor affords perhaps the most pleasing outgrowth of the Preceptorial Method. More than one preceptor has realized in large measure the opportunities of friendship which the Method offers. On the other hand the Committee feels that many of these opportunities have been slighted or not perceived.

It must be said at once that even the most successful preceptors have often felt their activities in this direction seriously hampered by the large number of students under their guidance. It is a heavy task to carry some of the schedules assigned, to pursue original investigation, and to cultivate friendships with more than a very few students.

There is a type of student who does not wish the friendship of members of the Faculty. Estimates of the number of representatives of this type will vary, but their existence is a regrettable fact, and wherever they are found, persistently unresponsive to overtures, little can be done for them. Cases of unresponsiveness to particular preceptors can be relieved by a change of preceptor as referred to on another page of this report (p. 45).

The Committee believes, on the basis of student testimony, that a number of students would be glad to become better acquainted with their preceptors. The Preceptorial Method is itself a step toward the student, and if cues be taken from that as well as from the natural attitude of hesitation of younger men toward their elders, obviously the first move should be made by the preceptor.

To those who are ready to take a genuine interest in the individual student and to show sympathy for his opinions, the Committee would suggest various moves which have proved effective in the past. The preceptor might set apart and announce certain times, two or three hours or an evening a week, when he would generally be in his room or at his home and when he would surely be glad to receive callers. In general it is believed that the personal private talks on occasions such as these afford the most fertile soil for the growth of real friendships. Cordial interest in the individual is the surest approach to the inner life as well as to the general mental make-up of the student, though meetings with students who are friends of each other, have notably advanced the personal relations between students and preceptors. More than in any other method of approach, the Committee believes the solution of this problem lies in thoughtful work done by the student and preceptor together. A common complaint of students charges a lack of co-operation on the part of their natural teachers in doing special work. For example, the intellectual curiosity of students is often excited about a subject which has been treated too briefly in lectures or textbooks. They ask directions for exploring this new field; the directions are given, and there the matter drops. The student may or may not follow the directions. But it must happen frequently that the student's curiosity has found no real response. He is not asked as to the results of his search. No hour is appointed or suggested when he might come

and discuss his findings. Hearty co-operation in work of this kind has more than once had far-reaching results, and the Committee would urge the practice of co-operation as the best method of establishing the most desirable personal relation between student and preceptor and as one of the most powerful aids to the Preceptorial Method in general.

2. *Afternoon hours.* We believe that the hours from 4 to 6 in the afternoon in First Term and from 1.30 to 3.30 in Second Term, at least on four days a week, Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday, should be definitely set aside by Faculty rule as hours in which preceptorial conferences may be held. It is true that preceptorial conferences are now, in some instances, held in those hours by agreement of preceptor and students. But in many cases students are unable to attend conferences at either of those hours because of outside engagements. In the main, the more unyielding conflicts seem to arise out of athletics. We believe that the present short recitation schedule (see page 30) makes it advisable to set aside these two afternoon hours for preceptorial conferences. Moreover, the definite assignment of these hours as preceptorial hours will, we believe, act as a corrective of the impression, which seems to have gained ground in recent years, that the entire afternoon of students trying for certain athletic teams is at the disposal of the coaches.

3. *General preceptorial committee.* A small permanent committee of men doing conference work should be appointed to have general oversight of preceptorial instruction: to equalize standards, to compare methods and make recommendations, to discuss problems, and to take up cases of individual students. Such a committee might possibly take over some of the duties of the present Committee on Examinations and Standing in so far as the preceptorial work of students through the term is concerned. At present we make no comparison of the records of men

who are not in danger of dropping. Such comparison through a central committee might make it easier to keep the average student at his work, and stimulate the man of unusual ability to his best efforts in all courses. Every preceptor who should discover that one of his students was not doing the best work of which he was capable would inquire of the committee as to the man's standing in other courses. The committee would also serve as a repository of information from which new members of the Faculty could learn the purposes and practices of the Preceptorial Method. It must be admitted that the work of the proposed committee could not be done to the best advantage until our staff is enlarged, but it seems wise for us to look forward to a time when we shall be able to carry such a plan to its proper fulfilment.

4. *Conference rooms.* Each member of the Faculty doing preceptorial work who lives on the campus or within easy distance thereof should invariably hold his conferences in his private rooms. It is understood that in extra-campus morning conferences time within the hour must be allowed for students coming from previous scheduled hours or going to subsequent ones.

5. *Office hours.* Each member of the Faculty doing preceptorial work should have office hours when he may be freely consulted by his students. If he holds his conferences in his own rooms, he will keep his office hours there. If he does not reside on the campus or within easy distance thereof, and therefore does not hold his conferences in his private rooms he should have an office on the campus where he would not only hold conferences, but also keep office hours. The public bulletin board in Nassau Hall should post all offices and office hours.

6. *Offices.* It is obvious, of course, that the recommendation in the preceding section would necessitate a very considerable addition to the number of rooms now available

as offices. Indeed, many of the small rooms in McCosh Hall are not at present suitable offices because of the difficulty of obtaining access to them and of locking them. Every office should be so private that the occupant could with safety place in it his own books to use with students. We believe that a careful canvass of the University buildings would show that a good many rooms now little used might be adapted as offices without difficulty. Tentatively, we suggest that in the School of Science and in Dickinson Hall slight alterations would make available ten or a dozen rooms that would serve. The expenditure of \$50 apiece in fitting up and furnishing some twenty rooms would go far, we believe, to supply the necessary offices and would do more for the improvement of preceptorial instruction than the same amount spent in any other one direction. Every office should be comfortably furnished with bookshelves, a table, chairs, and a rug. The rooms already fitted up by private gift have begun to take on individuality and to contain small permanent collections of books. No matter how simple the appointments, however, the great need is for rooms to which students may come without feeling that they are meeting their preceptors in small classrooms.

7. *University Club.* Better opportunity for meeting undergraduates informally and frequently is sorely needed. At present these opportunities are limited practically to the more or less frequent invitations to the clubs or to one another's rooms.

The organizing of a University Club open to all members of the University, where neither preceptor nor student would be in the position of host or guest, but would both be on the same footing, would go far to satisfy this need.

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to promote the efficiency of the Preceptorial Method of instruction at Princeton, we recommend that it be the sense of the Faculty

(1) That steps should be taken toward the standardization of salaries and promotions, and toward the institution of a system of sabbatical leave; and that the Board of Trustees be respectfully requested to take these matters under early consideration. (Chap. III, A, page 36.)

(2) That the Departments of the University using the Preceptorial Method should, in filling vacancies, be governed by the spirit of Chap. III, B, 1 (page 38).

(3) That, in general, preceptorial instruction be given only by professors and assistant professors. (Chap. III, B, 2, page 39.)

(4) That, where desired and possible, assistant professors be given opportunity to lecture or to conduct courses. (Chap. III, B, 3, page 40.)

(5) That in the conduct of preceptorial work and the scheduling of hours the intention of Chap. III, B, 4a and 4b (page 41) be preserved.

(6) That the function-name "preceptor" be dropped from the Faculty list in the University Catalogue, but that it be retained in all descriptions of courses in the Catalogue and departmental prospectuses, as in the example given. (Chap. III, B, 5, page 42.)

(7) That a reorganization of the direction of Hall work be effected along the lines suggested in Chap. III, B, 6 (page 42).

(8) That the Departments using the Preceptorial Method adopt the central committee system in assigning students to preceptors, and in changing assignments; and that, in assigning students to preceptors and in forming groups, the recommendations of Chap. III, C, 1, 2, 3, and 4 be adhered to as general principles (pages 44 and 45).

(9) That the recommendation of Chap. III, C, 5 be adhered to as a general principle (page 46).

(10) That preceptorial conferences be conducted along the general lines laid down in Chap. III, C, 6 (page 46).

(11) That the performance of written work is an indispensable feature of the Preceptorial Method of instruction. (Chap. III, C, 7, page 49.)

(12) That the Departments using the Preceptorial Method adopt the plan laid down in Chap. III, C, 8, 9, and 10 for directing the work of abler students (pages 50 and 51).

(13) That absences from preceptorial conferences be not recorded at the Registrar's Office. (Chap. III, C, 11, page 52.)

(14) That Departments using the Preceptorial Method adopt the style and system of examination described in Chap. III, C, 13a, b, c, d, and e (pages 54, 55, 56, and 57).

(15) That the resolution of the Faculty passed January 15, 1906, in regard to examinations under the Preceptorial Method (Chap. III, C, 13, C, page 56) be amended to read:

- 1—That in courses using the Preceptorial Method the examination questions be written and read under one of the three plans suggested in Chap. III, C, 13 (pages 54 and 55).
- 2—That on the recommendation of a preceptor a Department may exclude a student from the examination in any course in which his work with the preceptor has been unsatisfactory.
- 3—That in a preceptorial course greater weight be given to the term record than to the examination

record in passing, conditioning, or grading a student.

- 4—That after the examination the conditions and final grades in a preceptorial course be discussed in conference by those who have taken part in the instruction of the course, and that no condition be finally imposed on a student without the acquiescence of his preceptor and confirmation by the conference, nor shall a student's final grade be assigned without the agreement of his preceptor.

(16) That in assigning final grades the plan submitted in Chap. III, C, 14 (page 57) be adopted subject to the operation of the principle contained in section 4 of recommendation 15.

(17) That except in extraordinary cases fixed hours for preceptorial conferences be not changed immediately before or after vacations so as to fall within the week preceding or the week succeeding that for which the conferences were scheduled. (Chap. III, C, 15, page 59.)

(18) That, next year and thereafter, the afternoon hours from 4 to 6 in First Term and from 1.30 to 3.30 in Second Term on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays, be set aside as hours in which preceptorial conferences may be held. (Chap. III, D, 2, page 62.)

(19) That a permanent Committee of five be appointed by the President for the purposes named in Chap. III, D, 3, (page 62), and for such other duties in connection with the Preceptorial Method as the Faculty may from time to time assign to it.

(20) That, in accordance with Chap. III, D, 4 and 5 (page 63), members of the Faculty doing preceptorial work hold their conferences in their private rooms or in their offices, and keep regular office hours.

(21) That the proper authorities be requested to give

the suggestions contained in Chap. III, D, 6 (page 63) the earliest possible consideration.

(22) That the Departments using the Preceptorial Method put into immediate operation such of the above recommendations, nos. 1 and 20 excepted, as are adopted by Faculty action on this report and are feasible for immediate introduction, and that the other recommendations so adopted be put into operation at the beginning of the next academic year, or as soon thereafter as feasible.

(23) That the Committee of Eight on the Preceptorial Method of Instruction be discharged.

APPENDIX "A"

QUESTIONARY ISSUED MARCH, 1912

I. GENERAL APPLICATION

1. What is the understanding in your Department as to the nature of the Preceptorial Method of instruction, and the manner of conducting a preceptorial conference?

2. Is the Preceptorial System applied in all your courses?

3. What plan is followed in your Department in assigning students to preceptors?

4. Is it considered desirable, or not, that a student should continue to study under the same preceptor as long as he has work in your Department?

5. What degree of freedom is allowed the student in the choice or change of his preceptor?

6. What freedom is allowed the preceptors as to the nature and quantity of the work done preceptorially?

7. Have you any administrative rule or uniformity of practice as to the time of preceptorial hours, or as to the day of the week upon which they shall fall?

8. When a holiday falls upon a preceptorial day, is it your rule to omit the conferences scheduled for that day, or to have them made up at a special appointment?

9. If conferences of any course are omitted because they fall upon a holiday, is it your rule to omit all other conferences of that course scheduled for the other days of that week?

10. What, in your Department, is considered the proper size of a preceptorial group?

11. What at present is the average size of a group in your Department?

12. Has the average size of a group increased or diminished during the last seven years, and to what extent?

13. To what extent do the professors in your Department take part in the preceptorial work?

14. To what extent do the instructors in your Department take part in the preceptorial work?

15. To what extent do the instructors in your Department take part in the work of Junior and Senior years?

16. How far do you deem it advisable that instructors should teach in the courses of Junior and Senior years?

17. Would it seem to your Department advisable that all or any of the larger courses of Junior and Senior years, consisting at present of two lectures and one preceptorial conference each week, should be made to consist of one lecture, one hour of class-room work under an instructor, and one preceptorial conference?

18. To what extent are the preceptors conducting courses or lecturing in your Department?

19. To what extent are they engaged in graduate teaching?

20. To what extent are they engaged in class-room teaching?

21. To what extent is it considered advisable that, so far as circumstances allow, professors, preceptors, and instructors should be confined each to one function, that is, to lecturing, preceptorial work, and class-room teaching, respectively?

22. Should absences from preceptorial conferences be reported and recorded at the Registrar's Office?

II. RELATION TO CLASS-ROOM WORK

1. What proportions exist in the various courses in your Department, between the hours devoted to lectures or to class-room work, and those devoted to preceptorial work?

2. Have these proportions been altered during the last seven years, and to what extent?

3. How closely does the preceptorial work in each course follow the order or outline of the lectures, or of the work in the class-room?

III. WRITTEN WORK

1. How often are tests given of the preceptorial work?

2. Are such tests held by the individual preceptor, or by the preceptors in co-operation, or by the head of the course?

3. To what extent is written work required, other than written tests?

4. At the inauguration of the Preceptorial System it was advised that the quality of the student's English, particularly in written work, should be the concern of all his teachers, not merely of his teachers in English. To what extent has this been carried out in your Department?

5. What obstacles, if any, are there to such a method of improving the student's English?

IV. DEBARRING

1. What basis for debarring is in use in your Department?

2. As a criterion for debarment, is it the custom in your Department to establish a definite passing grade to which a student must attain in his preceptorial work?

3. In your Department is it agreed that a definite number of absences from preceptorial conferences incurs debarment? If so, what is that number?

4. What proportion of men are debarred from examinations in your Department?

5. Has there been any variation in this respect during the last seven years?

6. If so, how is it to be explained?

V. EXAMINATIONS

1. In framing the questions for the final examination, what is the relative emphasis laid upon the lectures or work in the class-room, and upon the preceptorial work?

2. What part, if any, do the preceptors take in framing the examination?

3. Do the preceptors take any part in the reading of the examination in courses involving preceptorial work?

4. Do preceptors in such courses read the papers of those who report to them for preceptorial work?

5. Where this is the case, is the final standing of a student in a course determined solely by the preceptor without any conference with the other teachers in the course?

VI. GRADES

1. In a course consisting of lectures and preceptorial work what is the comparative weight of the preceptorial work and of the examination in determining the final standing of a student in the course?

2. Does the comparative weight of the examination-mark increase, the lower the mark falls?

3. Does the comparative weight of the preceptorial work and of the examination vary between course and course in your Department? If so, please state the reason of that variation.

4. In a course consisting of work in the class-room and preceptorial work, what is the comparative weight of each in determining the final standing of a student in the course?

5. Have the proportions mentioned in questions 1 and 4 varied during the last seven years? What has been the tendency of this variation?

6. What system, if any, is in use in your Department of keeping account of the standing of a student in his preceptorial work?

7. May a student be conditioned in any course who has attained a passing grade in his class-room work and his examination, but whose preceptorial work has not been satisfactory?

VII. SUPERVISION

1. Is there any supervision of preceptorial work in your Department in the form of a manager, or a chairman, or a committee in charge?

2. Are conferences between the lecturer and the preceptors held from time to time regarding the plans and method of work? How often do these occur?

3. Are similar conferences, formal or informal, held among the preceptors? How often?

VIII. APPOINTMENTS

1. How are the preceptors in your Department appointed?

2. In your opinion has your Department the proper number of preceptors to carry on its preceptorial work in its fullest possible effectiveness?

APPENDIX "B"

QUESTIONARY ISSUED MAY, 1912

DEAR SIR:—

The Committee of Eight on the Preceptorial System asks you to draw up for its consideration

- (a) Your general criticism of the System as now operated;
- (b) Your suggestions for improving the efficiency of the System.

In addition, the Committee desires to have your opinions on the topics outlined below. These topics have emerged from general discussion and from consideration of the departmental replies to the questionnaire sent out in March.

The Committee earnestly hopes that, to enable it to reach useful conclusions on these problems, each member of the Faculty to whom the present letter is addressed will feel his responsibility in the matter and therefore will not suffer the Committee to reach conclusions without the help that is here requested.

It is urged that replies be sent on or before May 18th to Mr. V. L. Collins, Chairman of the Committee.

Very truly yours,

THE COMMITTEE OF EIGHT.

I. PERSONAL RELATION WITH STUDENTS

An intimate personal relation between student and preceptor is the most important condition of successful preceptorial work. In the majority of cases this condition has declined and in large part has distinctly failed of realization.

What suggestion have you to make toward repairing this failure?

II. GRADES

(1) The personal relation between preceptor and student, and, indeed, the whole effect of preceptorial teaching is closely connected with the question of grades. Shall the preceptor give no grade at all for preceptorial work, exercising only the penalty of debarment? Or shall he grade each weekly performance? Or shall he make no estimate of a student's preceptorial work until the end of the term?

(2) Some preceptors feel that their work is embarrassed when it is known that they are concerned in the final examination, and students attempt therefore to shape the conferences into a preparation for that examination, thus destroying the proper value of such conferences. If preceptorial work is graded, how important should that grade be in determining the student's final standing? How much should a preceptor have to do with the final examination—whether in compiling it or in reading the papers?

(3) There is no uniformity of practice in the application of the penalty of debarment. In some departments the penalty has never been imposed. Ought it to be done away with, or ought it to be more frequently imposed?

III. DIGNITY AND FUNCTION

The feeling prevails that the preceptorial function is inferior in dignity and importance to that of lecturing or conducting a course. As long as this is so, the Preceptorial System must suffer, and the ambition to attain the highest skill and finish in preceptorial teaching must give way to the ambition to lecture or conduct courses,—in short, to qualify for a professorship. What means can be devised to protect the System from this danger?

Partly to this end, it has been suggested that the best preceptors be ultimately advanced to the rank and salary of professors by permanent appointment, with the under-

standing that their chief function be preceptorial. What reasons would you urge for, or against, such a measure?

IV. CO-OPERATION

Preceptorial instruction has tended to become a mere pedagogical routine. The newer members of the staff have had no means of learning the preceptorial idea; the older members feel the danger of getting into a rut. Closer co-operation among the preceptors is evidently desirable. What ways would you suggest of establishing this co-operation, either between all the preceptors, or between those of a department or those collaborating in single courses, or between professors and preceptors?

APPENDIX "C"

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